

being unpatentable over *Billock* in view of *Schaffer*; and (5) claims 15-24, 29 and 30 as being unpatentable over *Girard* in view of *Schaffer*.

Thus, each of the pending claims 1-15 and 17-30 is rejected in view of *Schaffer*.

However, *Schaffer* was filed on March 6, 2000, which is after the priority date of the instant Application (November 17, 1999). Thus, to disqualify *Schaffer* as prior art with respect to pending claims 1-15 and 17-30, Applicant hereby perfects the instant Application's claim to priority by submitting an English-language translation of its priority document, JP Application No. 11-326576.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1-15 and 17-30 are allowable. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the application now is in condition for allowance with all of the claims 1-15 and 17-30.

If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Please charge any fees which may be required to maintain the pendency of this application, except for the Issue Fee, to our Deposit Account No. 19-4880.

Respectfully submitted,



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